

# Text of Reagan Speech on Contras

Special to the New York Times  
WASHINGTON, March 16 — Following is the text of President Reagan's speech tonight on aiding rebels fighting the Nicaraguan Government, as provided by the White House:

"My fellow Americans, I must speak to you tonight about a mounting danger in Central America that threatens the security of the United States. This danger will not go away; it will grow worse, much worse, if we fail to take action now.

I am speaking of Nicaragua, a Soviet ally on the American mainland only 200 hours' flying time from our own borders. With over a billion dollars in Soviet-bloc aid, the Communist Government of Nicaragua has launched a campaign to subvert and topple its democratic neighbors.

Using Nicaragua as a base, the Soviets and Cubans are becoming a dominant power in the crucial corridor between North and South America. Established there, they will be in a position to threaten the Panama Canal, interdict our vital Caribbean sea lanes and, ultimately, move against Mexico. Should that happen, desperate Latin peoples by the millions would be fleeing north into the cities of the southern United States, or to wherever some hope of freedom remained.

The United States Congress has before it a proposal to help stop this threat. The legislation is an aid package of \$100 million for the more than 20,000 freedom fighters struggling to bring democracy to their country and eliminate this Communist menace at its source. But this bill would cost an additional \$100 million. We are not asking for a single dime in new money. We are asking only for the permission to spend a small part of our present defense budget — to the defense of our own southern frontier.

## 'Fighting America Near Its Borders'

Gathered in Nicaragua already are thousands of Cuban military advisers, contingents of Soviet and East German and all the elements of international terrorism. Why are they there? Because, as Colonel Qaddafi has publicly exclaimed, "Nicaragua means a great thing, it means fighting America near its borders. Fighting America at its doorstep."

For our own security, the United States must deny the Soviet Union a beachhead in North America. But let me say one thing plain, I am not talking about American troops. They are not needed; they have not been since the democratic resistance began fighting for the supplies and support to save their own country from Communism.

The question the Congress of the United States will now answer is a simple one: Will we give the Nicaraguans' democratic resistance the means to recapture their betrayed revolution? Or will we turn our backs and ignore the injustice and the moral threat to the entire New World?

If we permit the Soviet Union to put a second Cuba, a second Libya, right on the doorstep of the United States —

How can such a small country pose such a great threat? It is not Nicaragua alone that threatens us, but those using Nicaragua as a privileged sanctuary for their struggle against the United States.

Their first target is Nicaragua's army. With an army and militia of 100,000 men, backed by more than 3,000 Cuban military advisers, Nicaragua's armed forces are the largest Central America has ever seen. The Nicaraguan military machine is more powerful than all its neighbors combined.

This risk represents much of the Western Hemisphere. Now let me show you the countries in Central America where weapons supplied by Nicaragua's Communists have been used: Honduras, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala. Radicals have been trained in Nicaragua. But the Sandinista revolutionary reach extends well beyond their immediate neighbors in South America and the Caribbean, the Nicaraguan Communists have found support in the form of military training, safe havens, communications, false documents, safe transit and weapons weapons to radiate from the following countries: Colombia, Ecuador, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Uruguay and the Dominican Republic. Even that is not all, for there was an old Communist slogan that the Sandinistas have made clear they

honor: the road to victory goes through the masses.

If maps, statistics and facts aren't persuasive enough, we have the words of the Sandinistas and Soviets themselves. One of the highest-level Sandinista leaders was asked by an American magazine whether the Communist revolution will — and I quote — "be exported to El Salvador, then Guatemala, then Honduras, then Mexico?" He responded, "That is the historical prophecy of Ronald Reagan that is absolutely true."

The Soviets have been no less candid. A few years ago, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko noted that Central America was "boiling like a cauldron" and ripe for revolution. In a Moscow meeting in 1983, Soviet Chief of Staff, Marshal Ogarkov, declared: "Over two decades ago there was only Cuba in Latin America. Today there are Nicaragua, Grenada and the Cuban battle is going on in El Salvador."

But we don't need their quotes; the African forces who liberated Grenada captured thousands of documents that demonstrated Soviet intent to bring Communist revolution home to the Western Hemisphere.

## The Intentions Of Managua

So, we are clear on the intentions of the Sandinistas and those who back them. Let us be equally clear about the nature of their regime. To begin with, the Sandinistas have revoked the civil liberties of the Nicaraguan people, depriving them of any legal right to speak, to picket, to assemble or to worship freely. Independent newspapers have been shut down. There is no free press, no independent labor movement in Nicaragua or any right to strike. As A.F.L.-C.I.O. leader Lane Kirkland has said, "Nicaragua's headlong rush into totalitarianism cannot be denied by any who has eyes to see."

For our own governments everywhere, the Sandinistas have launched assaults against ethnic and linguistic groups. The capital's only synagogue was desecrated and bombed — the entire Jewish community forced to flee Nicaragua. Protestant Bible meetings have been broken up by raids, by mob violence, by machine guns. The Catholic Church has been seen by anti-priests have been expelled from the streets after Catholics beaten in the streets after a priest was killed. The Catholic priest, Fr. Brando, has put the matter forthrightly: "We want to state clearly that this Government is not dealing with an enemy of the church."

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Western Hemisphere passed almost half our foreign trade, more than half our imports of crude oil and a significant portion of the military supplies we would have to send to the NATO allies in the event of a crisis. These are the choke points where the sea lanes could be closed.

Central America is strategic to our Western alliance, a fact always understood by foreign enemies. In World War II, only a few German U-boats, operating from bases 600 miles away in Germany and occupied Europe, inflicted crippling losses on U.S. shipping right off our southern coast.

Today, Warsaw Pact engineers are building a deep-water port on Nicaragua's Caribbean coast. Similar to the naval base in Cuba for Soviet-built submarines. They are also constructing, outside Managua, the largest military airfield in Central America — similar to those in Cuba, from which Russian Bear bombers struck the U.S. East Coast from Maine to Florida.

## Brief History Of Sandinistas

How did this menace to the peace and security of our Latin neighbors — and ultimately ourselves — emerge? Let me give you a brief history.

In 1979, the people of Nicaragua rose up and overthrew a corrupt dictatorship. At first the revolutionaries were idealistic and democratic, and respect for human rights. But among them was an organization called the Sandinistas. Theirs was a Communist organization, and their support of the revolutionary goals was sheer deceit. Quickly and ruthlessly, they took complete control.

Two months after the revolution, the Sandinista leadership met in secret in the West. They decided to know the "72-hour" document described themselves as the "vanguard" of a revolution that would sweep Central America, Latin America and finally the world. Their true enemy, they declared: the United States.

Rather than make this document public, they followed the advice of the Soviet Union, to hold it in secret. They wanted to keep it a facade of democracy. While Castro viewed the democratic elements in Nicaragua with contempt, he urged his Nicaraguan friends to keep scores of them in their coalition — in minor posts — as a window dressing to deceive the West. The West, they said, you can have your revolution, and the Americans will pay for it. More did we do pay for it. More did we do pay for it. More did we do pay for it.

Confronted with this emerging threat, early in my Administration I gave the Congress and the people a report, managed to get help for the nations surrounding Nicaragua. The Soviet Union, the Sandinistas and the people of El Salvador braved the threats and gunfiring of Communist guerrillas — guerrillas directed and supplied from Nicaragua — and went to the polls to vote decisively for democracy. For the Communist in El Salvador it was a humiliating defeat.

But there was another factor the Sandinistas never counted on, a factor that now promises to give freedom a second chance — the freedom fighters of Nicaragua.

You see, when the Sandinistas brought the revolution, many who had fought the old Somoza dictatorship turned to the hills, and the people of the French Resistance that fought the Nazis, began fighting the Soviet bloc Communists and the Nicaraguan guerrillas. These few have now been joined by thousands.

With their blood and courage, the freedom fighters of Nicaragua have pinned down the Sandinista Army and bought the people of Central America precious time. We must not let them a debt of gratitude. In helping to thwart the Sandinistas and their guerrillas, the resistance has contributed directly to the security of the United States.

Since its inception in 1982, the democratic resistance has grown dramatically in strength. Today there are more than 20,000 volunteers and more every day. But now the freedom fighters are running short, and they are virtually defenseless against the helicopter gunships Moscow has sent to Managua.

Now comes the crucial test for the Congress of the United States. Will

they provide the assistance the freedom fighters need to deal with Russian tanks and gunships — or will they abandon the democratic resistance to its Communist enemy?

In answering this question, I hope Congress will reflect deeply upon what it is the resistance is fighting against the Sandinistas.

Ask yourselves, what in the world are Soviets, East Germans, Bulgarians, North Koreans, Cubans and terrorists doing in our hemisphere, camped on our own doorstep? Is that for peace?

Why have the Soviets invested \$600 million to build Nicaragua into an armed force almost the size of Mexico's? A country 15 times as large, and 25 times as populous? Is that for peace?

Why did Nicaragua's dictator, Daniel Ortega, go the Communist Party Congress in Havana and endorse Castro's cause for the worldwide triumph of Communism? Was that for peace?

Some members of Congress asked me, "Why not negotiate? Good question — let me answer it directly. We have sought — and still seek — a negotiated peace and a democratic future in a free Nicaragua. Ten times we have met and tried to reason with the Sandinistas. Ten times we have been rebuffed. Last year, we endorsed church-mediated negotiations between the regime and the resistance. The Soviets and the Sandinistas responded with a rapid arm buildup of mortars, tanks, artillery and helicopter gunships.

Clearly, the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact have grasped the great strategic importance of Nicaragua. The Sandinistas have made their decision — to support the Communist. Fidel Castro has made his decision — to support the Communist. Now it is our turn to make our decision. With Congress' help, we can prevent an otherwise unjust invasion of the national security of the United States.

If we fail, there will be no avoiding responsibility, history will hold us accountable. This is not some narrow partisan issue; it is a national security issue, an issue on which we must act not as Democrats, nor as Republicans, nor as Democrats, but as Americans.

## 40 Years Ago, The Truman Doctrine

Forty years ago, Republicans and Democrats joined together behind the Truman Doctrine. It must be our policy. Harry Truman declared, to support peoples struggling to preserve their freedom. Under that doctrine, Congress sent aid to Greece just in time to save that country from the closing grip of a Communist tyranny. And with that same bipartisan spirit

we can save freedom in Nicaragua today.

Over the coming days, I will continue the dialogue with members of Congress, talking to them, listening to their concerns. Senator Scott Jackson, who led the fight on Capitol Hill for an awareness of danger in Central America, said it best: On matters of national security, the best politics is no politics.

You know, recently one of our most distinguished Americans, Clare Boothe Luce, had this to say about the coming vote: "In considering this crisis," Mrs. Luce said, "my mind goes back to a similar moment in our history — back to the first years after Cuba had fallen to Fidel. One day during those years, I had lunch at the White House with a man I had known since he was a boy — John F. Kennedy. Mr. President, I said, 'no matter how exalted or great a man may be, history will have time to give him no more than one sentence. George Washington — he founded our country. Abraham Lincoln — he freed the slaves and preserved the union. Winston Churchill — he saved Europe.'

"And what, Clare," John Kennedy asked, "do you believe my sentence will be?" "Mr. President," she answered, "your sentence will be that you have stopped the Communists — or that you did not."

Tragically, John Kennedy never had the chance to decide which that would be. Now, leaders of our own side, I believe, will vote to support the Communists. I stand with the resistance. We must not let them a debt of gratitude. In helping to thwart the Sandinistas and their guerrillas, the resistance has contributed directly to the security of the United States.

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"I have only three years left to serve my country," he said, "three years to carry out responsibilities you have entrusted to me. Could there be any greater tragedy than for us to sit back and permit this Communist menace, leaving my successor to face far more agonizing decisions in the years ahead?"

## 'Most Powerful Argument'

White House officials said the speech was designed to present "the most powerful argument we have on how Nicaragua threatens the security and vital interests of the United States."

A key White House official said tonight: "We don't see this as an ideological right-left issue. This is a different beast down there, a beast that ultimately threatens the United States."

Mr. Reagan, pointing to maps that he said showed Nicaraguan arms exports in the region as well as the strategic importance of Central America to the United States, portrayed the Sandinista Government as one that had built the largest "military machine" in Central America.

He also said the Sandinistas offered a haven for numerous international terrorist groups, provided weapons and training to radicals in at least a dozen nations in Latin America, persecuted and tortured religious leaders and served as a center for international narcotics traffic.

Using a photograph he said was secretly taken at a military airfield outside Managua, Mr. Reagan said, "I know every American parent concerned about the drug problem will be outraged to learn that top Nicaraguan Government officials are deeply involved in drug trafficking."

He said the photo showed Frederico Vaughn, "a top aide to one of the nine top officials who rule Nicaragua, loading an aircraft with illegal narcotics, bound for the United States."

The White House identified the Nicaraguan as an aide to Tomas Borge, Nicaragua's Interior Minister, and said the photograph was taken at an airfield controlled by the Interior Ministry and "under the watchful eye of a kingpin in the Colombian drug trade."

"There seems to be no crime to which the Sandinistas will not stoop — to an outlaw regime," Mr. Reagan said.

## 'Inflammatory,' Managua Says

The Nicaraguan Embassy, in a statement issued before Mr. Reagan's speech, said the Sandinista Government "believes that the serious and responsible U.S. policy towards Central America is urgently needed and should not be undermined by inflammatory rhetoric based on false premises and outright distortion."

The embassy said that "contrary to the President's assertion, more aid to the rebels would only damage efforts to negotiate. The statement said Reagan's Administration policy in the region raised the possibility of "creeping military involvement of U.S. combat troops" and "trigger bloody regional war in Central America."

At a White House briefing before the President's speech, a senior Administration official said that Mr. Reagan regarded the issue as vital to "hemispheric security and the fate of democracy" and that approval of the military and economic aid could result in "Soviet reassertment of its fundamental policy options."

As for the votes in Congress, the official said that "we still have a ways to go," particularly in the House. He said an estimate of the need for 10 to 12 votes in the House was "in the ballpark."

The official also said there was "some work to do" in the Senate but predicted that the Senate would be influenced by a favorable House result.

The official said that "most Central American heads of state" supported President Reagan's program to put military pressure on the Sandinista Government but were unwilling to say so in public. They are still not sure we can get this program through Congress," he said.

Mr. Reagan, in his speech, said he had no plans to use American troops in Nicaragua. "They are not needed, they have not been requested," the President said.

# REAGAN CONDEMNS THE SANDINISTAS

Continued From Page 1

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# Sandinista View of Contra Debate; Ortega Takes a Vacation

By STEPHEN KINZER

Special to the New York Times

MANAGUA, Nicaragua, March 16 — When Congress was debating aid to the Nicaraguan rebels last year, it seemed that most Government business in Nicaragua came to a halt every day. In the country joined the campaign against the proposals.

This year, it is different. With the military situation well in hand, the Sandinistas have appeared much less preoccupied by the debate in Washington.

"It's not that we aren't interested, but we certainly have the aid to be decided down," Vice President Sergio Ramirez Mercado said in an interview. "But we are not involved in the debate. We are not actors. It is up to the Congressmen here to decide, not us."

## This Year's Trip: Cuba

Last year Congress first rejected and then approved the Reagan Administration's request for \$27 million in non-lethal aid to the rebels, who are known as the Contras. With the aid expiring, the Administration is now seeking to address the rebels \$100 million, \$70 million of which would be used to buy military equipment. The House of Representatives is

scheduled to take up the request this week.

Some American politicians expressed outrage last year when the Nicaraguan leader, Daniel Ortega Saavedra, went to Moscow just as the aid debate was in progress. He was cited as an important factor in shifting Congressional sentiment in favor of aid.

Despite that controversy, the Sandinistas have not changed their travel habits. As Congress prepared to vote on the \$100 million aid proposal in March, President Ortega took his family for a working vacation in Cuba.

While the Ortigas were in Cuba, other top Sandinista officials, Bayardo Arce Castaño, flew to Moscow to attend the Communist Party Congress.

When American leaders speak in favor of aiding the Contras, as President Reagan did tonight in a nationally broadcast address, the Sandinistas no longer jump to react. The official newspaper, Barricada, which once devoted long columns to rebutting argu-

ments advanced in Washington, now all but ignored them.

According to diplomats and other specialists, the Sandinista Government has made major military advances in the last year. These successes appear to have given the Sandinista leaders renewed confidence that they can withstand any renewed rebel campaign, even if it is financed by the United States.

"The Contras have no perspective of any kind," Mr. Ramirez said. "They are a machine that was badly designed and is now falling apart."

"Increase the Morale" On Friday, Mr. Ramirez met with nine Republican members of Congress who were visiting Managua. He indicated that the Government did not feel pressed to make any concessions.

The vote in Washington is irrelevant, he said, "because we are going to wipe out the Contras whether or not they get that \$100 million."

In recent days President Reagan and senior Administration officials have argued that rejection of the aid proposal would increase the possibility that United States troops might, at some point, be sent to fight in Central

America. But Luis Carrion Cruz, a member of the Sandinista National Directorate, said in an interview that he believed the reverse was true.

"If the aid is approved, it will certainly increase the morale of the Contras," Mr. Carrion said, "and it will also mean that countries in Central America will feel better about helping them."

"But if Congress rejects the aid," he said, "I think it will be clear that the American people are rejecting the military aid effort. It is obvious that is what the Contras represent. Defeating the aid proposal would inject new energy into the military effort, and a diplomatic solution would make any kind of military escalation much more difficult."

Israel Retains Chief of Staff JERUSALEM, March 16 (Reuters) — The Israeli Cabinet agreed today to extend by a year the term of the Chief of Staff, Gen. Moshe Levy, a Cabinet spokesman said. General Levy, a year-old former paratrooper commander, took on the three-year post in 1983.

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